



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**

# News Release

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Date: March 31, 2000

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## **AGENCIES TO BEGIN FORMAL ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT CONSULTATION ON OPERATION OF MISSOURI RIVER**

Formal consultations between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding the annual operations and related projects on the Missouri River begin April 1. The Endangered Species Act consultation will produce a list of actions likely necessary to avoid jeopardizing the continued existence of threatened and endangered species associated with the Missouri River.

The federal agencies are going to investigate additional opportunities to protect listed species consistent with the Corps' responsibilities to operate the reservoir system for all congressionally authorized purposes.

The endangered interior least tern and threatened piping plover are small shorebirds that nest on barren sandbars. Following consultations on these birds in 1990, flows are managed annually to protect their nesting areas. Additional measures include relocation of nests threatened by high water, incubator hatching of eggs and release of fledged birds.

The endangered pallid sturgeon lives near the bottom of slow-moving rivers with sand and gravel bars. It was listed under the Endangered Species Act after consultations occurred on the terns and plovers in 1990, so no protections under the act are now in place for Missouri River operations.

The Corps manages the dams and reservoirs for flood control, hydropower, recreation, fish and wildlife, navigation, irrigation, water supply and water quality.

For the last year and a half, the two agencies have been conducting consultations on three projects in the Missouri River basin: the operation of the main stem dams; the navigation and bank

stabilization project from Sioux City, Iowa, to the mouth of the Missouri; and the operation of the Kansas River basin projects managed by the Corps.

Despite the complexities of a system that runs nearly 2,400 miles through eight states, and drains one-sixth of the United States, both agencies are optimistic. “I am confident the Service and Corps can work together to reach agreement on the largest Endangered Species Act consultation of its kind currently underway in the United States,” said Ralph Morgenweck, Director of the Service’s Mountain-Prairie Region.

William Hartwig, Great Lakes-Big Rivers Regional Director, added, “I am encouraged by the collaborative working relationship of our staffs to address these complex and challenging issues.”

“It is my desire that we find those elements of a comprehensive package that will likely conserve the listed species of the Missouri River,” said Brig. Gen. Carl Strock, Northwest Division Engineer.

Pre-development, the Missouri River represented one of North America’s most diverse ecosystems. It has been altered to accommodate flood control, hydropower generation, urban and agricultural development, lake and river recreation and commercial navigation. These changes significantly altered the river ecosystem to the detriment of such species as the least tern, piping plover and pallid sturgeon.

During the consultation, the Service and Corps will ask a group of scientists for an independent review of the best available scientific information. This data will form the basis of several aspects of the draft biological opinion due in June. The final opinion is scheduled for completion in July.

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